

March 6, 2023

Chairman Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

I am an 8th grader at Frederick Classical Charter School. I will meet you in Annapolis tomorrow with friends from charter schools in Frederick County. We represent over 24,000 charter school students across the state who need SB0646 bill to be passed.

It has been 20 years that Maryland charter schools have gone without any public funding to pay for our school buildings. The "Per Pupil Allocation" provides operational funding which is commensurate with our peers. Unfortunately, charter schools do not get to spend all of this money on staff and student learning, with a large part of it spent on rent. My school's building costs \$730,000 every year, or about 17% of our PPA, and will increase due to inflation. Passing this bill would mean we can immediately hire the teachers and specialists we need as well as fix or improve our buildings. In the future, we can have real school buildings, with outdoor green spaces and enough classrooms, maybe with nice cafeterias and regular gyms and science labs and working heating and AC. I have included exhibits below, pictures of three of our charter schools in Frederick County. The outdoor play areas are just parking lots.

Please understand that charter school funding does not take anything away from other public school students and this bill does not impact them. We are public school students, too, but we do not receive a fair and equitable level of public funding compared to our peers in traditional public schools. We are each being given on average \$2,000 less every single year, and just because we choose to attend a different kind of public school. This bill will cost about \$48 million per year, which is not much compared to the overall education spending in Maryland, but it would make a huge difference for more than 50 schools across the whole state.

I love my school. We have small class sizes. We have great teachers and staff that enjoy being there and teaching us. It is a supportive, positive learning environment with a special way of teaching. We have a very diverse group of students and we learn from each other. We would have liked to have a better school building and not be located in commercial area with a warehouse and offices next door. We do the best with what we have. We know our building is much nicer than some other charter schools. For example, Monocacy Valley Montessori has really bad plumbing problems and last year had to miss school because of it. They are excited to buy another building after looking for a really long time, but the one they found is actually a doctor's office building. They still will not have greenspace.

Please support this bill, SB0646, and make sure that it is mandatory to include in the budget every year. Public charter school students deserve your support.

Sincerely,
Savona Rizzo
8th Grade, Frederick Classical Charter School
Frederick, MD

Exhibit 1:
Frederick Classical Charter School Entrance and Outdoor Playspace



Exhibit 2:
Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School Entrance and Blacktop Playspace



Exhibit 3:
Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School Entrance and Outdoor Playspaces

